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“Our Sea of Islands”: Migration and *Métissage* in Contemporary Polynesian Writing’

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I

Ko te iwi te wairua o te waka, ko te waka te wairua o te iwi

(The people are the spirit of the canoe, the canoe is the spirit of the people)

Māori proverb

Since the 1980s, and particularly following the establishment of the interdisciplinary journal *Diaspora* in 1991, a proliferation of scholarship focused upon migrancy and diaspora culture has emerged within the field of literary studies, as well as in the humanities more generally. This scholarship has intersected with, and responded to, wider debates on the impact of globalisation, transnationalism, ethnic fundamentalism, and international terrorism upon migration patterns in the late twentieth century and into the new millennium. Diaspora scholarship has fallen into three broad categories: where some (particularly earlier) diaspora theorists established binaristic models in which migrants were believed to experience a ‘subjective split between ... hostland and homeland’, other commentators have emphasised the ‘rhizomorphic, fractual’ and ‘multipolar’ structures of diasporic identities, with a third category of scholarship devoted to analysing the specificities of individual and unique diasporic contexts rather than establishing generalist paradigms of migrant experience (Mishra 2006: 16-18; see also Brah 1996; Braziel and Mannur 2003; Keown 2007; Krishnaswamy 1995).

In its exploration of metaphors of oceanic migration in contemporary Polynesian writing, this essay is attentive to the theoretical questions raised by these various debates on diaspora culture, exploring the notion of a regional or transnational ‘Oceanic’ identity embraced by a variety of Pacific (and particularly Polynesian) writers and theorists, but also acknowledging the specific historical circumstances and consequences of sea migration within individual Polynesian cultures (Māori, Samoan, Hawai‘ian, Tahitian, and so on). Throughout, the essay maintains a dual/multiple temporal focus, identifying the ways in which imagery of the sea - and more

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specifically the 'traditional' or precolonial Polynesian waka/vaka¹ (voyaging canoe) - has been deployed by Polynesian writers as a chronotope not only of pre-European (and early contact) patterns of migration and cultural exchange within the Pacific, but also of the large-scale migrations of Polynesians to various neighbouring 'Western' capitalist nations (Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, and the United States) since the decolonisation period following the Second World War. In addition to investigating the metaphorical properties of the waka/canoe in Polynesian literature and theory, the essay also engages with the complex cultural exchanges brought about by various historical phases of European maritime exploration and settlement in the Pacific, analysing the ways in which Polynesian writers explore the effects of intermarriage and cultural contact between Polynesians and Europeans since the late eighteenth century in particular.

In investigating these patterns of cross-cultural exchange, the essay adopts the French term '*métissage*', which, alongside related concepts such as 'hybridity' and 'syncreticity', denotes the genetic and cultural exchanges and intermixing that take place as a consequence of migration and the formation of diasporic communities, particularly in (post)colonial contexts. The term '*métissage*' is related to the word '*métis(se)*', which was adopted in a variety of French colonial contexts (such as Canada and New Caledonia) to refer to persons of mixed race, and which, in the context of nineteenth-century racial theory in particular, gained negative associations based on prejudice against miscegenation as a route to degeneration and racial 'impurity' (see De Souza and Murdoch 2006: pg viii). More recently, however, the term has been recuperated by postcolonial scholars in order to refer to various types of intercultural, generic, and linguistic syncreticity as explored in a wide range of postcolonial or 'mixed-race' writing. As Francoise Lionnet notes, the term '*métis*', and its Spanish equivalent '*mestizo/mestiza*', broadly correspond with terms such as 'half-blood' or 'mixed-breed' in English, but she advocates the term '*métis*' over English-language equivalents due to its complex etymology, which suggests a much more enabling and flexible range of applications:

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[The term '*métis(se)*'] derives etymologically from the Latin *mixtus*, "mixed," and its primary meaning refers to cloth made of two different fibers, usually cotton for the warp and flax for the woof: it is a neutral term, with no animal or sexual implication.... Furthermore, its homonym in ancient Greek, *mētis*, is the allegorical "figure of a function or a power," a cunning intelligence like that of Odysseus, which opposes transparency and the metaphysics of identity and is thus closely related, in practice, to the meaning of *métissage* as I understand it here.... Within the Greek context, the reality of *mētis* as a form of *techne* projects itself on a plurality of practical levels but can never be subsumed under a single, identifiable system of diametric dichotomies. It is a form of *savoir faire* which resists symbolization within a coherent or homogeneous conceptual system since it is also the power to undo the logic and the clarity of concepts. (1989: 14)

Exploring the implications of these etymological associations, Lionnet argues that the term '*métis(se)*' carries the potential to challenge binaristic or divisive models of race, miscegenation and intercultural exchange, and to encapsulate the formal complexities of postcolonial or 'mixed-race' writing, which often draws upon an eclectic range of generic and linguistic forms in order to create a new cultural and literary aesthetic based on diverse (rather than monolithic) cultural codes and ideologies. This focus on *métissage* as a linguistic or rhetorical phenomenon, as Lionnet notes, points to the 'ideological and fictional nature of our racial categories while underlining the relationship between language and culture', as well as reinforcing a 'phenomenon of creative instability in which no "pure" or unitary origin can ever be posited' (1989: 15-16). As if to underscore her arguments for the referential flexibility of the term, Lionnet draws upon the concept of *métissage* not only in order to discuss francophone writing and colonial contexts, but also to analyse the work of African American writers such as Zora Neale Hurston and Maya Angelou, thus setting a precedent for the approach I am taking in this essay, which focuses upon both anglophone and francophone Polynesian writing.

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The etymologies and associations that Lionnet identifies in her analysis of *métissage* are kept in play throughout this essay, which examines *métissage* in the Pacific both at the level of (material) cultural exchange, and within literary texts produced by Polynesian writers, particularly those who explicitly identify themselves as of 'mixed race'. Lionnet's claim that '*métissage*' calls into question the very category of 'race' is also directly relevant to this essay, which endorses John McLeod's argument that 'race' is essentially a 'political construction', based upon 'human invention and not biological fact', that serves the interests of particular constituencies (McLeod 2000: 110). European racial theory has its own particular history within the Pacific region, where the geocultural categories of 'Polynesia' ('many islands'), 'Micronesia' ('small islands') and 'Melanesia' ('the black islands') were devised by French explorer Jules-Sébastien-César Dumont d'Urville in the early 1830s in order to categorise and compartmentalise the diverse peoples of the Pacific (Dumont d'Urville 1832; Douglas 1999: 65).² Of these three geocultural regions, the category of Polynesia (which falls primarily within a triangular geographical zone stretching from Hawai'i in the far north, to Easter Island in the east, and Aotearoa/New Zealand in the southwest) proved to be of particular fascination to European travellers and writers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the region was frequently represented as a South Seas Eden inhabited by free-loving, neo-Grecian 'noble savages' – putative exemplars of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theories on *le bon sauvage* - untouched by the corruptions of the 'civilized' European world (Smith 1985: 42; Keown 2005: 1-2; Rousseau 1754). Much of this discourse was focused upon the area which became known as French Polynesia: explorer Louis Antoine de Bougainville's rapturous description of Tahiti (which he visited in 1768) as 'La Nouvelle Cythère'³, for example, was to form a mainstay of Enlightenment and Romantic conceptions of the Pacific as a sexual and environmental paradise, helping to inspire a range of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century cross-cultural romance narratives such as Pierre Loti's *Le Mariage de Loti* (1880) and Paul Gauguin's *Noa Noa*⁴ (both set in Tahiti), and Herman Melville's *Typee* (1846, set in the Marquesas).

Stereotypes of Polynesia as an exotic/erotic paradise have persisted into the contemporary era, fuelled by the tourist industry and various popular media (Wilson

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1999: 10), and many contemporary Polynesian writers have resisted and critiqued these stereotypes, and the imposition of European racial models more generally, in their work (Wendt 1976, 1981; Hau'ofa 1993, 1998; Figiel 1996, 1998; Spitz 1991). Yet it is also worth noting that of the three geocultural categories devised by Dumont d'Urville, Polynesia is the most clearly defined and coherent, with established ethno-linguistic affiliations between its various peoples, and many contemporary Pacific writers embrace the term 'Polynesia' as a means by which to assert their kinship with neighbouring islanders within the region (see DeLoughrey and Hall 1999: 13-14; Keown 2007: 193; Wendt, Sullivan and Whaitiri (eds) 2003: 1-3).

This strategy of asserting commonalities between Pacific peoples, whilst remaining critical of the generalisations imposed by European racial and cultural theorists, is a particular feature of the theoretical writings of Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa⁵, who, in the 1990s, published a series of influential essays advocating a regional 'Oceanic' identity based on the shared marine heritage of Pacific peoples. The term 'Oceania' is derived from *l'Océanie*, a French colonial label for the Pacific, but Hau'ofa reinvigorates and reorients the term in order to draw attention to the historical, cosmological and ecological importance of the sea for Pacific Islanders, many of whom still depend on the ocean for their livelihoods, and who possessed sophisticated maritime technologies that allowed them to navigate established trade routes throughout the Pacific long before Europeans arrived in the region. As Hau'ofa observes, since the early days of European incursion into the Pacific, Westerners have commonly conceptualized the Pacific as a constellation of tiny, isolated 'islands in a far sea', remote from European colonial centres of power and dependent on 'First World' nations for their socio-economic survival. While acknowledging that many Pacific Islands are geographically 'small' and often reliant upon overseas aid to bolster their fragile economies, Hau'ofa nevertheless asserts that Indigenous Pacific oral traditions and cosmologies figure Oceania as part of a vast universe comprising not just land surfaces, but also 'the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars ... that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas' (1993: 7). In seeking to

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recuperate Indigenous methods of conceptualising the Pacific, Hau'ofa therefore advocates considering the Pacific Islands not as tiny 'islands in a far sea' but rather as a vast 'sea of islands' seen 'in the totality of their relationships' (1993: 7; see also Keown 2007: 3-4).

Hau'ofa's theory bears some resemblance to Barbadian critic Kamau Brathwaite's model of 'tidalectics', an interrogation of the relationship between oceans, islands, and island peoples based on a 'tidal dialectic' which, as Elizabeth DeLoughrey notes, 'resists the synthesizing telos of Hegel's dialectic by drawing from a cyclical model, invoking the continual movement and rhythm of the ocean' (Brathwaite 1983: 42; Mackey 1991: 44; DeLoughrey 2007: 2). In her book *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (2007), DeLoughrey draws upon Brathwaite's novel in order to develop a comparative study of Caribbean and Pacific literatures, a project similar to that undertaken by editors Pascale De Souza and H. Adlai Murdoch in 'Oceanic Dialogues', a special double issue of the *International Journal of Francophone Studies* published in 2005. In their editorial introduction, De Souza and Murdoch point out that many of the island cultures of the 'Black Atlantic' and the Indo-Pacific are united by their experience of French colonialism, as well as through their fluid relationship to the ocean which surrounds and sustains them, and they argue that theoretical models such as Paul Gilroy's 'Black Atlantic' paradigm can and should be adapted to explore 'oceanic dialogues' between these regions, which have rarely been considered within a comparative context but instead sectioned off into separate branches of international postcolonial studies (255-7).

In its attempt to explore and establish trans-Pacific dialogues and interrelationships, Hau'ofa's 'oceanic' model resonates with these various 'tidalectic' paradigms of cultural exchange, similarly emphasising the ways in which the lives of Pacific Island peoples have been – and continue to be – regulated by the ebb and flow of the sea, which has served both as a means of subsistence, and as a route by which Pacific peoples have traversed and settled the region. In the precolonial period, the oceanic relationships Hau'ofa describes included complex patterns of migration, trade and cultural exchange facilitated by sophisticated Polynesian and Micronesian

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maritime technologies. Some 5-6,000 years ago, the ancestor's of today's Polynesians began migrating into the Pacific from South-east Asia following the introduction of the sail and the invention of the outrigger to stabilise dug-out canoes on ocean voyages (King 2003: 31-2). Over several millennia, these Polynesian voyagers pushed eastwards as far as Easter Island, north to Hawai'i, and finally, south to Aotearoa/New Zealand (between 800 and 1200 AD), settling various islands they encountered during their travels. As Michael King notes, far from being a consequence of 'accidental' or random voyaging, as many Western scholars believed until quite recently, these Polynesian migrations were 'deliberate' and 'wide-ranging', using wave, wind and stellar patterns as navigation aids (33-4). Voyaging vessels became larger and more sophisticated over time, enabling longer journeys and the transportation of larger numbers of people as well as animals and crops. By the time the era of widespread precolonial Polynesian voyaging ended (around 1400-1500 AD), Polynesians had become 'the most widely dispersed people on the planet' (King 2003: 37).

Following this initial phase of migration and settlement, Polynesians continued to traverse the Pacific Ocean, with the arrival of Europeans giving rise to further forms and phases of sea migration. From the late eighteenth century, when improvements in the design of ships, rigging and navigational instruments enabled Europeans to explore the Pacific on a much larger scale than ever before, many Pacific Islanders travelled on European ships as interpreters, guides, and 'exotic curiosities' transported back to the imperial centres. (Omai/Mai (a Tahitian), and Māori warrior-chief Hongi Hika, were two notable Polynesian visitors to Britain during this period, visiting London in 1774 and 1820 respectively.⁶) Throughout the nineteenth century, the expansion of commercial trading networks prompted many islanders to leave their countries of birth in search of employment: some were transported as far as North America in order to work in the whaling, fur and timber industries, while others worked on colonial plantations throughout and beyond the Pacific. Large numbers of Indians and other South Asians were also brought into the Pacific to work on European plantations in Fiji and Hawai'i in particular, and many of their descendants remain in the region today (see Keown (2007) and Spickard (2002)).

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While a number of Polynesian writers (such as Albert Wendt and Robert Sullivan⁷) have engaged with the sea travels of Pacific Islanders during the early contact and colonial phases, much contemporary Pacific writing is inflected by the large-scale dispersal of Pacific Islanders to neighbouring industrialised 'Western' settler colonies such as Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Canada, New Caledonia and the United States following the Second World War, when there was a demand for manual labour during a time of industrial expansion. By this time, Western economic imperialism in the Pacific had made many island nations 'dependent' upon their powerful neighbours for imports and financial aid, and many islanders went abroad for employment and education opportunities, sending money back to their home countries in order to keep their fragile economies afloat. The acronym 'MIRAB' - conflating 'migration, remittances, aid and bureaucracy' - was coined as a label for Pacific Island cultures characterized by these conditions, which continue today (Watters 1987; Goss and Lindquist 2000). Even by the mid-1980s, over 37 per cent of ethnic Polynesians were living outside their home countries, and in countries such as Niue, the Cook Islands, and Tokelau, the number of expatriates currently far exceeds those remaining at home (Hayes 1991: 3; Subramani 2003: 7). The majority of post-war Polynesian migrants originate from the Samoan archipelago, with Aotearoa/New Zealand and the United States as the main destinations, and although large numbers of Polynesians have also emigrated to Australia, and some French Polynesians to metropolitan France, exact numbers are difficult to determine as Australia and France do not particularise ethnicity on their census forms (see Keown 2007: 187).

Many of the early post-war Pacific migrants travelled abroad on ships, but the growth of commercial aviation networks across the Pacific in the decades following the Second World War radically altered the patterns of Pacific migration, with lengthy sea voyages largely replaced by comparatively rapid transcontinental air travel. This has resulted in a complex multidirectional flow of people, goods and capital between Pacific Island nations and the various diasporic nodal points within and beyond the Pacific, thus, as Hau'ofa notes, representing a continuation of the fluid patterns of migration and cultural exchange that have regulated the lives of Pacific Islanders for centuries (1993: 15-16). In this context, it is notable that the cultural and artistic

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renaissance that developed in the Pacific during the decolonisation era of the 1960s and 1970s⁸ - when Indigenous artists, musicians and writers began to revive creative forms suppressed during the colonial era, and to forge new, syncretic artistic forms drawing upon both Indigenous and 'Western' traditions - included a renewed interest in precolonial maritime technologies and migration patterns. In 1973, for example, the Polynesian Voyaging Society (PVS) was founded in Hawai'i in order to research ancient navigation techniques and to prove that Polynesians systematically travelled and settled the islands of Polynesia without the aid of navigational instruments. One of the Society's first projects was to build Hokule'a, a replica of an ancient voyaging canoe and the first to be built in Hawai'i in over 600 years. The Hokule'a undertook its maiden voyage in 1976, travelling from Hawai'i to Tahiti under the guidance of Micronesian navigator Mau Piailug⁹, one of the few remaining Pacific Islanders well-versed in precolonial navigation techniques. Mau Piailug subsequently passed his skills on to a number of members of the Polynesian Voyaging Society, who, during the late 1980s and 1990s, successfully retraced the migration routes made by their ancestors throughout the Polynesian triangle, finally reaching Easter Island/Rapa Nui in 1999.¹⁰ The successes of the PVS triggered an explosion of interest in traditional canoe-building and navigation throughout Polynesia: a notable focal point was the 1992 Festival of Pacific Arts (held in Rarotonga), which included a waka/vaka building and sailing programme in which New Zealand Māori, Tahitians, Hawai'ians and Cook Islanders participated, and which resulted in a 1995 expedition in which six replica canoes (constructed in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Hawai'i and Rarotonga) travelled from the Marquesas Islands to Hawai'i (see Jonassen 1995).

This revival of interest in precolonial waka/vaka voyaging in the Pacific is also evident in other Pacific creative arts of the decolonisation period, including the corpus of Indigenous Pacific literature in English that emerged during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Metaphorising the patterns of travel and cultural exchange that have linked Pacific peoples since ancient times, Cook Islander Marjorie Tuainekore Crocombe, inaugural editor of *Mana* (the first regional journal of Indigenous Pacific writing, founded in 1972) envisaged the periodical as a newly-launched canoe richly stocked with literary cargo flowing in from 'every part of the Pacific' (Crocombe

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1974: 1). Similarly, in his editorial introduction to *Lali* (1980), the first anthology of Indigenous Pacific creative writing in English, Albert Wendt describes Pacific writers as nourished by the 'warmth and love of our mother, the Pacific', and conceptualizes the creative works of individual Pacific writers as bubbling springs of water making their contributions to the vast plentitude of the literary 'ocean' (Wendt (ed.) 1980: xix). Wendt's anthology included a variety of poems replete with sea-imagery: his own poem 'Inside Us the Dead', and Epeli Hau'ofa's 'Our Fathers Bent the Winds', commemorate Polynesian ancestors who sought and settled 'these islands by prophetic stars' (Wendt (ed.) 1980: 284), while poems by Francis Tekonnang (of Kiribati) and Sano Malifa (of Samoa) target the movements of waves and tides as metaphors for the vicissitudes of human life (108, 276), indexing the way in which the sea, and oceanic migrations, have shaped the lives of Pacific Islanders across the centuries (see Keown 2007: 4-5). More recently, Cook Islander Tom Davis's 1992 novel *Vaka* describes the history of the Polynesian voyaging canoe Takitumu over a period of three hundred years; Robert Sullivan's poetry collection *Star Waka* (1999) meditates upon Polynesian maritime migrations from precolonial voyaging to the journeys of the Hokule'a; and Albert Wendt's 2003 novel *The Mango's Kiss* includes a substantial section detailing the construction of a Samoan 'alia (double-hulled canoe), referencing the sophisticated maritime technology that prompted Bougainville to confer the name 'Navigators' Islands' upon the Samoan archipelago in 1768 (Meleisea 1987: 43).

References to Oceanic sea-travel are also widely evident in French Polynesian literature, theory and art. A notable recent example is the 2006 anthology *Vārua Tupu*, which presents a range of French Polynesian creative writing in English translation. The anthology features creative works such as 'Voyage Through Words and Notes', a poem by Tahitian writer Flora Devatine which uses oceanic voyaging as a metaphor for Indigenous cultural continuity, here figured as the 'water of memory' which 'exists to show us what its community can teach humanity' (Stewart *et al.* (eds) 2006: 24). The poem is accompanied (on the facing page) by a reproduction of 'Hema and His Mother, Hina', a painting by artist Bobby Holcomb which depicts figures from Tahitian legend fishing from a traditional va'a. Holcomb is Hawai'ian by birth but

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settled in Tahiti in 1976, and his interest in the oceanic heritage of Pacific Islanders is reflected in several other of his paintings which have been reproduced in the anthology, including 'Lapita Pottery' (which references artefacts that helped establish the sequence of Indigenous migrations through the Pacific), and 'The Story of Laka-Mai-Kahiki and His Three Wives' (which depicts a Hawai'ian navigator who made a series of 'epic voyages' to and from Tahiti around 1200 A.D.) (Stewart *et al.* (eds) 2006: vi-vii; viii-ix). These images resonate with the introduction to *Vārua Tupu*, where editors Frank Stewart, Kareva Mateata-Allain and Alexander Dale Mawyer argue that the most 'important unifying element' in Eastern Polynesia is 'a shared history of astonishing transpacific voyaging' (xiv). This claim references a more extensive argument developed in Mateata-Allain's 2005 essay 'Oceanic peoples in dialogue: French Polynesian literature as transnational link', which adapts Hau'ofa's 'Oceanic' model in order to develop a conceptual paradigm for French Polynesian literature, here identified as a transnational, 'metaphoric *va'a* that crosses imperial boundaries to reconnect Oceanic peoples' (2005: 275). Mateata-Allain's essay is published in the special issue of the *International Journal of Francophone Studies* discussed above, and is distinctive in its attempt to establish a theoretical link between anglophone and francophone Pacific literatures: as Robert Nicole points out, the majority of Pacific literary criticism has focused primarily upon anglophone writing, while francophone writers have remained largely 'unheard' outside their countries of origin (Nicole 1999: 265).

This very brief overview of representations of the waka/vaka in Indigenous Pacific discourse might suggest that Polynesian writers and theorists have tended to valorise the voyaging canoe as a chronotope of a static, precolonial past populated by maritime heroes fearlessly navigating their way through the vast watery domain of Oceania. However, the material and metaphorical significance of oceanic voyaging in Pacific literature is far more complex than such a superficial summary might suggest. It is my contention that, perhaps partly in response to the developments in 'international' diaspora theory outlined at the beginning of this essay, Polynesian literature and theory produced since the 1990s in particular has not only been attentive to the particularities of maritime history within individual Polynesian cultures (both

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pre- and post-colonial), but has also probed the complex patterns of intercultural exchange and *métissage* that have developed as a consequence of European maritime and colonial incursion into the region. The remaining sections of this essay will explore some of these complexities, firstly with reference to the influential 'Oceanic' theories of Epeli Hau'ofa, secondly in a discussion of Polynesian literary responses to French nuclear testing in the Pacific, and finally with reference to the work of a number of Polynesian writers who have explored the politics and poetics of *métissage* in their work through metaphors of oceanic voyaging.

II

It is notable that Epeli Hau'ofa's influential arguments for a shared 'Oceanic' identity amongst Pacific Islanders have been described as bearing a 'superficial resemblance' to celebratory models of diaspora culture (Edmond and Smith 2003: 10), and it is arguable that some of his assertions - such as the claim that '[a]n identity that is grounded in something as vast as the sea should exercise our minds and rekindle in us the spirit that sent our ancestors to explore the oceanic unknown and make it their home, our home' (1998: 393) - have a utopianist and somewhat nostalgic ring to them. Hau'ofa's desire to develop a regional paradigm inclusive of all Pacific Islanders does, inevitably, necessitate a certain degree of generalisation, but it is important to note that Hau'ofa also modulates his more abstract theoretical claims by providing illustrative examples drawn from particular historical or national contexts. In addition to invoking metaphors of 'traditional', precolonial oceanic voyaging, for example, he also draws upon his own expert knowledge in the fields of anthropology and economics, outlining the complex patterns of Pacific migration and cultural exchange that have developed during the twentieth century. Significantly, Hau'ofa also acknowledges that some Pacific diasporic communities have been formed as a result of involuntary exile rather than intrepid expansionism. In his 1998 essay 'The Ocean in Us', for example, Hau'ofa discusses the forced evacuation of the Banaba and Bikini Islanders, the former to make way for phosphate mining operations in the early twentieth century, and the latter to expedite atomic tests by the United States during the Cold War, when Britain, France and the US undertook various nuclear tests in the Pacific (397; see also Keown 2007: 189). Hau'ofa's essay also draws specific

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attention to the ways in which climate change threatens Pacific ecosystems, identifying the problems that rising sea levels pose for the inhabitants of low-lying Pacific island nations such as Tuvalu (where islanders are facing imminent mass evacuation), and detailing the environmental damage caused by French nuclear testing in Moruroa¹¹ - part of the Tuamotu island group in French Polynesia – between 1966 and 1996 (Hau'ofa 1998: 397, 400).

Significantly, the international controversy created by French nuclear testing in the Pacific has given rise to a substantial corpus of Polynesian creative writing which – in keeping with Hau'ofa's approach outlined above - explores the material as well as creative implications of human incursion into the Pacific, politicising the relationship between Pacific Islanders and the ocean which sustains them. The vigorous anti-nuclear movement which developed in response to the testing united Polynesian peoples throughout the Pacific, precipitating a range of creative writing emphasising the spiritual significance of the ocean (which, according to Polynesian cosmology, is protected by the sea-deity Tangaroa¹²), and lamenting the damage to the marine environment created by nuclear pollution. Much of this writing has, unsurprisingly, been produced by francophone Pacific writers: notable examples include a special 1982 trilingual edition of the Pacific journal *Mana*, featuring antinuclear poems by Ma'ohi (Tahitian/French Polynesian) poets Hubert Brémond, Henri Hiro and Charles Manutahi; Chantal Spitz's *L'île des Rêves Écrasés* (1991), a novel set on a fictional French Polynesian island selected as the site of a French nuclear testing base; and various poems and short stories by Kanaky (Indigenous New Caledonian) writer and political activist Dewé Gorodé. Gorodé is one of the few francophone Pacific writers whose work has been translated into English, and her poem 'Wave-Song' – translated from the French version, 'Clapotis', and published in *Sharing as Custom Provides* (2004), a parallel French-English edition of her poetry – uses sea-imagery as a focus for her anti-nuclear message. The poem was written in 1974 from Camp-Est prison in Noumea (where Gorodé had been incarcerated for her involvement with the Kanaky independence movement), and expresses frustration at the fact that the poet's view of the ocean is blocked by the high prison walls. Nevertheless, she can hear the lapping of the waves, which soothe her 'watchful

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sleep', but also carry news of 'the huge white mushroom cloud/infecting the sky over Mururoa', where atmospheric tests were still being undertaken at the time the poem was written (2004: 43). The poem posits nuclear testing as a disastrous new chapter in the history of the colonial oppression of Indigenous Pacific peoples, but it ends triumphantly as Gorodé interprets the restless movement of the waves as a symbol of the endurance and resilience of Pacific Islanders, whose strength and resolve will '[carry them] forward/in dignity' (2004: 43). Gorodé's personal feelings of entrapment are thus offset by her sense of belonging to a wider Indigenous Pacific community that has travelled freely through the vast waters of Oceania for centuries prior to the arrival of Europeans (see Keown 2007: 99).

French nuclear testing in the Pacific has also given rise to a substantial corpus of anglophone anti-nuclear writing: a notable example is the 1995 anthology *Below the Surface: Words and Images in Protest at French Testing on Moruroa*, which includes a range of material by Māori and other New Zealand-based writers and artists. 'Mururoa/Moruroa', a poem in the anthology by Māori writer Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, represents a rare attempt to establish a dialogue between anglophone and francophone Polynesian writers, as Te Awekotuku empathises with the Indigenous peoples of Moruroa through references to a shared ocean-going heritage, 'remembering / canoes seeded cast / a thousand years ago / from homeland islands' (Hall (ed.) 1995: 6). In her poem 'Te Rapa, Te Tuhi, Me Te Uira (or Playing with Fire)', Keri Hulme (of mixed Māori, Scottish and English descent) similarly appeals to a shared seafaring heritage amongst Polynesians, referring to the Pacific Ocean by its Māori name, 'Te Moananui a Kiwa'. The name translates as 'The Great Ocean of Kiwa', referencing the travels of a legendary Polynesian explorer, and in denouncing the nuclear testing, Hulme's poem emphasises the environmental conservatism and spiritual reverence that putatively underpin the relationship between Indigenous Pacific Islanders and their ocean, the 'age-old path' that constitutes their 'birth and making zone' (53). Kingi Ihaka's poem 'Ngā kōrero mo ngā mahi kino', which appears first in Māori and then in English (under the title 'A statement about bad deeds'), also posits Polynesian spirituality as a basis for Indigenous protest against

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nuclear testing, arguing that any failure to 'take care of the sea' represents an affront to the sea-god Tangaroa (57).

As the above discussion demonstrates, Polynesian literary responses to French nuclear testing in the Pacific represent one way in which Pacific Island writers have invoked sea voyaging as a more general metaphor for migration and diaspora culture in the Indigenous Pacific, while simultaneously remaining attentive to the political and environmental implications of human incursion into Oceania. This awareness of the material as well as creative implications of Oceanic voyaging is also evident in other contemporary Polynesian literary texts which are not specifically focused upon nuclear issues. A particularly notable recent example is *Whetu Moana* (2003), an anthology of anglophone Polynesian poetry whose title (which translates as 'Ocean of Stars') is directly inspired by the seafaring heritage of Pacific Islanders. In their introduction, editors Albert Wendt, Robert Sullivan and Reina Whaitiri explain the rationale behind the title:

The sky and the sea must have seemed both boundless and eternal to the early Polynesians.... This immense space of sea and sky was, and continues to be, the known world of the Polynesian.... Polynesians ... believe that when we die we become the stars that help to guide the living across that huge body of water Te Moana Nui a Kiwa. The people learned ... about reading the ocean currents, the winds and stars, using that knowledge to sail and navigate their lives by. That is why we have called this anthology *Whetu Moana, Ocean of Stars*. (2003: 1)

Like Hau'ofa, then, the editors of *Whetu Moana* identify the ocean, and the sea-travels of their Polynesian ancestors, as unifying metaphors for contemporary Polynesian cultures. Like Hau'ofa, the editors are also attentive to the differences, as well as the linkages, between Polynesian cultures, arguing that the title of the collection also encapsulates the 'bubbling polyglot ... diversity' of Oceania, a region of many unique islands and individual cultures (2). (In signalling this diversity, however, the editors also acknowledge that in selecting anglophone poetry only, they have had to exclude

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other linguistic traditions of Polynesia, including the growing corpus of francophone writing discussed above.) *Whetu Moana* includes poetry from Aotearoa/New Zealand, Hawai'i, Tonga, Samoa, the Cook Islands, Niue and Rotuma, but departing from the format of earlier anthologies of Indigenous Pacific writing, the editors choose not to categorise poets into discrete national groupings¹³, but rather arrange them in order of surname in order to 'generate views of culture that are both common and strange, to see Polynesian poetry through a prism creating many coloured bands: age, language, place, polity and gender' (3). As this statement suggests, the editors' choice of an alphabetised system encourages the reader to trace transnational commonalities between poets included in the anthology, but also recognises the multiplicity of factors that have contributed to each poet's unique personal and aesthetic profile. Crucially, the biographical notes that precede each poet's contribution signal the fact that the bloodlines of many of the poets are not restricted to a single ethnic or national 'category', but are in fact the product of *métissage*: many are of mixed Polynesian, Asian, and European ancestry.

This foregrounding of the mixed genetic heritage of many contributors to the volume in part indexes a pan-ethnic 'Pasifika' identity which has emerged in Aotearoa/New Zealand (where many of the poets in the collection are based) as a result of the establishment of Polynesian diasporic communities in the post-war period. At the time of the 2001 Census, one in sixteen (or 231,801) people in Aotearoa/New Zealand were of Pacific Island ethnicity, with Polynesians making up the vast majority of those numbers (www.stats.gov.nz). Half (115,017) of those registered as Pacific Islanders by ethnicity were Samoan, while the next largest groups (in descending order) were Cook Island Māori (52,569), Tongans (40,716), Niueans (20,148), Fijians (7,041), Tokelauans (6,204) and Tuvalu Islanders (1,965) (Keown 2007: 190).¹⁴ While each of these groupings has maintained a strong sense of ethnic distinctiveness, the work of several poets in *Whetu Moana* also suggests that intermarriage and intercultural contact between the different groups has created new trans- and multi-ethnic affiliations. In his poem 'Two-in-one', for example, Samoan poet Lemalu Simi expresses a sense of political and ethnic kinship with New Zealand Māori who, like Samoans, have experienced colonization by Pākehā (white) New

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Zealanders. The poem is dedicated to John Rangihau (a leader from the Tühoe tribe who advanced Māori welfare and cultural revival initiatives in the decades following the Second World War), and Simi captures the cultural *métissage* implied by the poem's title in an image of the poet 'etched / into the skin' of Rangihau's face, ending the poem with the assertion that Samoan and Māori peoples are 'still one in Polynesia / united more so now than ever' in their quest for self-determination (Wendt *et al.* (eds) 2003: 178-9). In his poem 'Disgrace', Tim Pa'u (born in Aotearoa/New Zealand of Samoan and German descent) expresses similar sentiments, conveying his hope that 'Republicanism' will come soon for 'da Tagata Whenua' (Wendt *et al.* (eds) 2003: 155). Pa'u's use of the term 'Republicanism' is suggestive, not only referencing recent debates about whether New Zealand should cut all legislative ties to Britain (whose monarch remains New Zealand's head of state), but also projecting a future in which Polynesians (rather than Pākehā New Zealanders) dominate the political landscape. Significantly, Pa'u's statement enacts a form of linguistic as well as cultural *métissage*, as the first word in the familiar phrase 'tangata whenua' (people of the land), used to refer to the Indigenous Māori of Aotearoa, is replaced by the Samoan cognate 'tagata', thus blending Māori and Samoan phonology in order to draw attention to a shared ethnic and linguistic heritage. This type of *métissage* is one of the many varieties of intercultural fluidity envisaged by the editors of *Whetu Moana*, pointing towards the fact that the ancient waka/vaka referenced in their introduction not only transported Polynesian peoples throughout Oceania, but also disseminated a common ancestral language which has developed its own unique dialectal forms within the manifold communities spread throughout the region.

In addition to exploring forms of cultural or inter-ethnic *métissage* between various Polynesian communities in Oceania, many of the poets in *Whetu Moana* also reflect upon their own genetic *métissage* as Polynesians with European ancestry. Before exploring some specific examples of this kind of *métis(se)* poetry, it is perhaps worth considering, for a moment, the pitfalls of imposing biographical readings upon literary texts. It is undoubtedly the case that of all the literary genres, poetry, and particularly lyric poetry, is most commonly subjected to a biographical reading, often interpreted as expressing the intimate personal thoughts and ideologies of the poet-

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artist. Yet many poets, like other creative writers, adopt a variety of personae in their work, and it is risky to assume that the personal profile of a 'speaker' in a poem accords with that of the poem's creator. On the other hand, it is also true that much 'postcolonial' or 'ethnic minority' poetry (and other forms of writing) is strongly motivated by identity politics, as many writers seek to explore or resolve personal or collective conflict attendant upon the experience of colonisation, racial prejudice, or social marginalisation. This is not to suggest that all 'postcolonial' or 'ethnic minority' writing is necessarily reactionary or inflected solely by negative experience: as Lionnet and other commentators have pointed out, a particular feature of *métis(se)* writing is its ability to explore and release the positive (as well as painful) creative tensions and complexities associated with the mixing of peoples in multi-ethnic contexts (Brennan 2002; Hasebe-Ludt 2003; Lionnet 1989). As Lionnet puts it, *métis(se)* writers 'have to articulate new visions of ourselves, new concepts that allow us to think *otherwise*, to bypass the ancient symmetries and dichotomies that have governed the ground... *Métissage* is such a concept and a practice: it is the site of undecidability and indeterminacy, where solidarity becomes the fundamental principle of political action against hegemonic languages' (6). Lionnet's statements point towards the conceptual and aesthetic paradoxes that can arise in intercultural writing, where *métis(se)* writers on the one hand react against dominant discourses by establishing an alternative discourse based on minority-cultural 'solidarity', while simultaneously denying the type of ethnic fundamentalism that has motivated the racist rhetoric of colonial discourse, instead seeking to establish new, multifaceted discourses and subgenres that express the complexities of *métis(se)* experience. In this context, autobiographical writing - particularly that which blends 'fact' and 'fiction', or draws upon creative literary conceits - presents a particularly enabling format for developing a new *métis(se)* aesthetic attuned to the complexities Lionnet identifies.

These arguments provide a useful context within which to consider the work of contemporary writers of mixed Polynesian and European descent. Lionnet's formula allows for a consideration both of writers who explore the continuing *difficulties* attendant upon being 'mixed-race', and those who draw upon their mixed heritage more positively in order to create new syncretic aesthetic visions. In the

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former category are *Whetu Moana* poets such as Selina Tusitala Marsh (of Samoan, Tuvalu, German and English descent), whose poem 'afa kasi' probes the linguistic and ideological limitations of the title phrase, a Samoan phonetic approximation of 'half-caste'. Perhaps reflecting upon the quadriplex nature of her own bloodlines, Marsh expresses frustration at the binaristic oppositions and divisions implied by the word 'half', and at the fact that colonial racial prejudices have persisted into the present day, where people of mixed Polynesian and European descent are still stigmatised as 'different'. The final lines of the poem produce a formal figuration of the semantic and genetic divisions associated with the term 'afa kasi', with alternate phrases aligned left and right down the page (Wendt *et al.* 2003: 133). In her poem 'You're peering into my face' (also published in *Whetu Moana*), Alice Te Punga Somerville, of mixed Māori and Pākehā descent, explores a related problem: the tendency for *métis(se)* people to be misrecognised as European if their non-caucasian ancestry is not particularly visible in their physiognomy. In her poem, Te Punga Somerville uses the passport photograph as a metaphor for the imposition of specular identities upon 'mixed-race' peoples, expressing a wish that those who police ethnic 'border controls' might recognise and accept her own 'whakapapa [genealogy] passport' (Wendt *et al.* (eds) 2003: 215). Te Punga Somerville's poem resonates with 'Silence ... on another marae' by Keri Hulme (of Scots, English and Māori ancestry), who laments the fact that when she attends tangihanga (funerals) and other gatherings on Māori marae (ceremonial meeting places), her 'pale and bluegrey-eyed' appearance causes many Māori to treat her as an ethnic outsider (Wendt *et al.* (eds) 2003: 76). The poem plays upon the Māori word 'manuhiri', used on the marae to refer to visitors (of whatever ethnicity) hosted by the tangata whenua (local people): here, Hulme recontextualises the term to signify her exclusion by those Māori who categorise her as a stranger to their culture (Wendt *et al.* (eds) 2003: 76).

In her article 'Waharoa: Māori-Pākehā Writing in Aotearoa/New Zealand', Te Punga Somerville has discussed Hulme's writing alongside the work of a number of other writers of mixed Māori and Pākehā descent, arguing that while there are vibrant traditions of 'mixed race' writing in other parts of the world, Aotearoa/New Zealand still appears wedded to colonial models in which 'half-castes' were stigmatised and

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expected to choose one ethnic strand by which they wished to be identified. As Te Punga Somerville notes, while assimilation policies of the early twentieth century pressured many 'mixed-race' individuals into denying or suppressing their Polynesian heritage, the Māori cultural renaissance of the 1970s, and the politics of biculturalism that emerged in the 1980s, prompted many Māori-Pākehā writers (such as Apirana Taylor) to reclaim and embrace their Māori ancestry, but at the expense of their Pākehā heritage, as individuals again felt the necessity to choose one identity or the other (Te Punga Somerville 2002).

Te Punga Somerville's arguments hold true for a large proportion of contemporary Māori writing, including much of the Māori-Pākehā poetry published in *Whetu Moana*, but there are exceptions to this general rule. Keri Hulme is a particularly interesting case in this context. In a range of her poetry, and in her Booker-Prize-winning novel *The Bone People* (1983), Hulme has explored, in some detail, the social pressures experienced by individuals of mixed ancestry and ostensibly European appearance (Kerewin Holmes, the 'mixed-race' protagonist of *The Bone People*, closely resembles Hulme herself in many respects), and her predicament was projected into the public arena when Pākehā critic C. K. Stead objected to her being awarded the Pegasus Award for Māori Literature (for *The Bone People*) on the grounds that she had only a one-eighth proportion of Māori blood (Stead 1985: 103-4). Stead's arguments were in part prompted by a sense that Hulme was benefiting from a cultural climate in which claiming ethnic minority status had become 'fashionable' and – in this case – profitable for mixed-race writers. Stead and other critics also argued that the Māori and Pākehā elements of Hulme's novel remain in uneasy opposition, and that the final section of the narrative, in which a rediscovery of Māori 'spirituality' (embodied in a mauriora or sacred object brought to Aotearoa by precolonial Māori voyagers) is posited as a route to inter-ethnic healing, is 'willed' and 'unconvincing' (Stead 1985; Brown 1989; Jones 1987). However, at a formal and symbolic level, Hulme's novel exemplifies the aesthetic complexities which Lionnet has identified as a central feature of *métis(se)* writing, transcending many of the putative binarisms and inter-ethnic schisms explored at the surface level of the narrative. The novel frequently invokes paradox and multiplicity as alternatives to

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binary opposition, drawing upon Māori cosmogonic and aesthetic forms which record an 'ambivalent tension' (rather than straightforward opposition) between union and separation (Hanson 1983: 15), and including a scene in which Kerewin Holmes creates a tricephalos, a figure which transcends the racial and formal binaries of the colonial dialectic and projects a new, multifaceted cultural milieu (see Keown 2005: 118, 125).

A further notable exception to Te Punga Somerville's argument that Māori-Pākehā writers feel compelled to privilege one ethnic strand over the other is the work of Robert Sullivan, another 'mixed-race' poet included in the *Whetu Moana* anthology. Of particular interest for this essay is the fact that Sullivan has explored his mixed ancestry through metaphors of oceanic migration, recognising that his blended bloodlines are a result of both Polynesian and European voyaging through the Pacific. In his poem 'Waka 80' (from his 1999 poetry collection, *Star Waka*), for example, Sullivan refers to Peter Robinson, an artist who represented his mixed Māori and Pākehā descent in a painting featuring a fleet of predominantly white-coloured waka with one 'brown one, depicting his Maori descent' among them. Sullivan adapts this motif to an exploration of his own mixed Māori, Scottish and Irish descent, observing that 'If I had an eight waka fleet / five would be Maori', and indexing his Irish ancestry in the image of a coracle (89). Here, and in many of Sullivan's other 'waka' poems, the canoe is used as a symbol of cultural continuity, and he expresses regret that while he can trace his Māori ancestry back several generations, he can only 'go back a little way' with his Scottish and Irish 'inheritance' (90). In another *Star Waka* poem, Sullivan assumes the persona of an 'anonymous' English settler 'fresh off the boat from Bristol', and explores – in opposition to nineteenth- and twentieth-century social Darwinist models emphasising the putative 'fatal impact' of European colonial incursion upon Pacific Islanders – the sense of cultural dissolution experienced by British settlers who came to the Pacific in the nineteenth century (1999: 97). Sullivan's exploration of *métissage* in the Pacific therefore traces a multidirectional exchange between European and Pacific cultures, and in poems such as 'Waka 62: a narrator's note' (reprinted in *Whetu Moana*), he figures this exchange in terms of a *mélange* of transportation technologies from around the world: precolonial waka are

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situated alongside 'spacecraft, oxygen tanks, caravans led by elephants', all (fore)seen by the 'pāua¹⁵ eyes of gods and ancestors' (Wendt *et al.* (eds) 2003: 200). In this and other poems, Sullivan's formal figuration of *métissage* is also evident in the blending of Pacific and European myths of voyaging and odyssey: Polynesian explorers such as Kupe and Māui are brought into dialogue with Ulysses and Orpheus (1999: 70, 98-9; 2002: 50), and European incursion into the Pacific is imaginatively inverted in poems such as 'London Waka', where Māori, travelling in a waka concealed 'in the belly' of a steamship, invade and sack London in a 'postcolonial' refiguration of the siege of Troy (2005: 6-7). Theorist Erika Hasebe-Ludt has described this kind of mythopoeic syncreticity as a central aspect of the creative process of *métissage*, in which writers living 'in between' cultures '(re-)create the memories and stories of [their] "lived curriculum" in between the mixed strands of others' stories from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds'. Through this process, myths are interwoven with autobiography in a dynamic process of self-creation and 'be-coming' (Hasebe-Ludt 2003: 459).

I want to end this essay with a brief consideration of the work of Caroline Sinavaiana-Gabbard, a writer of mixed European and Samoan descent whose work epitomises the strategies Hasebe-Ludt describes, interweaving myth and autobiography through metaphors of oceanic voyaging. In the autobiographical introduction to her poetry and prose collection *Alchemistries of Distance* (2001), Sinavaiana-Gabbard describes her life as a succession of journeys: born in American Samoa, she grew up on a military base in Florida (where her father was stationed), later travelling back to American Samoa as a teacher and finally securing an academic position at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She describes her life as characterized by 'distances, leave-takings and arrivals somewhere else', arguing that travelling is part of her genetic makeup, carried in her 'Polynesian navigator DNA', as well as in her European ancestry: '[t]he patriarchal genes swam through the 19th century from Germany to England then Australia where great-great-grandpa ran off to sea ... and landed in Samoa [where] he married a native girl' (13). Sinavaiana-Gabbard aestheticises her own 'journey' as a poet and diasporic Samoan through the chronotope of the va'a/canoe, drawing in particular on a Samoan legend in which

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Nafanuä, the Samoan war goddess, travels from the underworld to the 'world of light' in a canoe in order to defeat an army of invaders (22-3). Sinavaiana-Gabbard emphasises the symbolic importance of the canoe as an emblem of tradition and cultural continuity not only in this legend, but in Samoan culture more generally: as she puts it, 'culture ... is the boat that can cross the vä, the space between then and now, here and there, the distances between time and space'. As she observes, this is a dynamic view of culture which is summarised in the popular Samoan folk song and proverb, 'O le Va'a fau Pö fau ao' ('The Boat Being Built Night and Day'), in which 'every generation gets to add its own planks of wood to the structure' of the cultural canoe (24).¹⁶ Like Robert Sullivan, Sinavaiana-Gabbard draws upon this conceptualisation of the canoe as a symbol both of precolonial traditions or myths, and of cultural continuity and dynamism, throughout her work. Her poem 'Sä Nafanuä' (reprinted in *Whetu Moana*), for example, describes modern diasporic Samoan women as the 'gypsy daughters' of Nafanuä: as they set out on their modern journeys, the hand of Nafanuä 'steers [their] boat' and 'plants [them] like seeds in the new / land' (2001: 44). Here, the legend of Nafanuä's odyssey is adapted to a modern feminist vision in which the poet herself, along with other diasporic Samoan women, become urban warriors, armed with 'paintbrush & camera/laptop & lawbook' and other weapons that equip them for survival in the contemporary technocratic metropolitan world (2001: 43). The poem therefore encapsulates the strategies of self-creation and empowerment that Lionnet, Hasebe-Ludt and others have identified as a central tenet of *métis(se)* writing, as the legend of Nafanuä is developed into an enabling template not only for Sinavaiana-Gabbard's personal poetics, but also for the experiences of modern diasporic Samoans more generally. This is not to suggest that Sinavaiana-Gabbard's vision is unproblematically utopian: she does acknowledge, for example, that many contemporary diasporic Samoans are being 'lost at sea' as they become increasingly involved in drugs, gang wars, violent crime and the machinations of capitalism (24). Sinavaiana's work, like that of other Polynesian writers and theorists such as Hau'ofa and Sullivan, is therefore tempered with a certain sober pragmatism, but this does not negate the positive potential of metaphors of oceanic voyaging as explored throughout her writing. As I have endeavoured to

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demonstrate in this essay, for contemporary Polynesian writers, the voyaging canoe, with its long material and symbolic history in Pacific cultures and discourses, remains a potent chronotope of the dynamism and resilience of Indigenous Pacific cultures, which have withstood centuries of colonial incursion and developed new syncretic ideologies, narratives and aesthetic forms attuned to the complexities of the contemporary globalised world.

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Please refer to the published article for citation purposes.

Endnotes

¹ Cognates in other Polynesian languages include wa'a (Hawai'ian) and va'a (Samoan and Tahitian). The word 'canoe' is potentially misleading as a translation for precolonial Polynesian sea-vessels, as many were large enough to carry several hundred people, but it is the most commonly-used translation of 'waka/vaka' amongst Polynesian writers and theorists and I therefore retain it here.

² Dumont D'Urville outlined these geocultural categories in his essay 'Sur les îles du Grand Océan', published in the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* 17 (1832): 1-21. The context and implications of D'Urville's theories are explored in detail in a special issue of the *Journal of Pacific History* (38.2, 2003), which also includes the first English-language translation of D'Urville's essay. In addition to Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia, Dumont D'Urville included a fourth region, Malaysia (comprising the Malay Archipelago), but as this area is considered part of Southeast Asia rather than Oceania, I do not discuss it here.

³ Bougainville's formulation is an allusion to Cythera, the legendary island home of Venus/Aphrodite.

⁴ Gauguin's narrative was conceived in the 1890s but has a complicated textual history: there are three distinct versions of the text as well as several fragments, released in various publications in the decades following the text's conception (see Edmond 1997: 247-8).

⁵ Hau'ofa was born in Papua New Guinea to Tongan missionary parents.

⁶ Another famous Polynesian voyager of this period was the Tahitian chief and navigator Tupaia, who travelled from Raiatea to Aotearoa/New Zealand on the *Endeavour* with Captain James Cook and, after learning sufficient English on the journey, acted as translator and mediator between Cook's crew and New Zealand Māori (whose language is cognate with Tahitian) (King 2003: 103).

⁷ Wendt's novel *The Mango's Kiss* (2003) features a young Samoan man who becomes first mate on an American whaling ship in the early part of the twentieth century, while in his poetry collections *Star Waka* (1999) and *Voice Carried My Family* (2005), Sullivan offers poetic meditations on the travels of Omai/Mai, Tupaia, and other 'early contact' Polynesian voyagers. Sullivan's poetry is discussed in more detail later in this essay.

⁸ Samoa was the first Pacific Island to gain its independence (in 1962), and a number of other Pacific Islands were decolonised in the 1970s and 1980s. Some Pacific countries have yet to gain their independence: French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna, and New Caledonia all remain French territories, while Hawai'i (annexed by the US in 1900) became the fiftieth US state in 1959, and as is the case in Aotearoa/New Zealand and New Caledonia, its indigenous population in many ways remains socio-politically subordinated to the dominant white settler culture. American Samoa and Guam are still US territories, while the Northern Mariana Islands became a Commonwealth of the US in 1986. Easter Island remains a province of Chile, and West Papua remains under Indonesian jurisdiction.

⁹ Piailug is from Satawal in the Caroline Islands, part of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). Video clips in which he discusses navigation are included in 'The Canoe is the People', a CD-ROM about Indigenous Pacific navigation which was produced as part of UNESCO's 'Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems' (LINKS) project. See www.unesco.org/links

¹⁰ A brief history of the activities of the Polynesian Voyaging Society, including the information discussed in this essay, can be found at <http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/hawaiian/voyaging/pvs/aboutpvs.html>

¹¹ In this essay I privilege the Polynesian spelling (Moruroa) over the French version (Mururoa).

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¹² 'Tangaroa' is the spelling used in Cook Island and New Zealand Māori. Cognates include 'Tagaloa' (Samoa), Tangaloa (Tonga), Ta'aroa (Tahiti), and Tana'oa/Taka'oa (Marquesas).

¹³ See, for example, *Lali* (1980) and *Nuanua* (1995), edited by Albert Wendt, and *Te Rau Maire: Poems and Stories of the Pacific* (1992), edited by Marjorie Crocombe *et al.*

¹⁴ The composition of these immigrant communities reflects New Zealand's status as a former colonial power in the Pacific: Western Samoa, the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau all became New Zealand territories in the early part of the twentieth century, while Tonga (like Fiji and Tuvalu) has had close administrative links with Aotearoa/New Zealand, particularly in the education sector (Keown 2007: 190).

¹⁵ Sullivan here indexes the practice, in Māori art, of using paua (abalone) shell to represent the eyes of ancestral figures and deities.

¹⁶ Notably, this conceit resonates with the Māori proverb ('the people are the spirit of the canoe...') included as an epigraph in section one of this essay.